

Questions and Answers about Hepatitis B

Q What is hepatitis B?

A Hepatitis B is a serious liver disease caused by a virus. The virus enters the blood stream, attacks the liver, and can cause illness and even death. Sometimes the virus can stay in the body for a lifetime and cause ongoing liver damage, including liver cancer.

Q How is it spread?

A Hepatitis B can be spread by coming in contact with an infected person's blood; for example:

- Living with someone who is infected with hepatitis B
- Being infected during birth (mother to baby)
- Having sex with an infected person
- Sharing toothbrushes and razors
- Sharing needles for street drug use, body piercing or tattooing.

Q What are the signs and symptoms?

A Some infected people never feel sick, but they can still infect others and many develop severe liver disease. Other people are sick for several months. Common signs and symptoms of hepatitis B are:

- Yellowing of skin and eyes
- Headaches
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling like throwing up
- Fever

Q How can you prevent it?

A

- Get vaccinated against hepatitis B.
- Use a condom or latex barrier when you have sex.
- Don't share personal articles such as needles (syringes), razors, toothbrushes, earrings or any item that may have even small amounts of blood on it.

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Q Why should you get vaccinated?

- A**
- Vaccination is the best protection against hepatitis B infection.
 - Hepatitis B vaccination is required before daycare, kindergarten and 7th grade.

Q Where can you get vaccinations?

- A**
- Adults should ask your health care provider about the vaccine.
 - To find out where children can get free vaccinations, please call:
1-800-427-8700.

9/00

Your local Public Health Center is:

